



How Can the RCRA Brownfields Prevention Program Help You?



Visit EPA's
RCRA Brownfields
webpage at:

[http://epa.gov/
swerosps/rcrabf](http://epa.gov/swerosps/rcrabf)



What is the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)?

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) was enacted by Congress to require the safe management of municipal and industrial wastes. Some of these wastes are defined as "hazardous wastes." The requirements of RCRA are generally carried out by authorized state RCRA programs, and EPA provides oversight and support. These programs regulate hazardous wastes from the point when it is first generated until it is finally disposed of (and beyond) in order to prevent the contamination of soil, surface water, and ground water. Sometimes, however, wastes are improperly managed and must be cleaned up. The RCRA program has a component called RCRA Corrective Action for the cleanup of wastes at RCRA hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities. By making sure that wastes are properly managed, the RCRA program helps prevent properties from becoming future brownfields. For more information, contact the RCRA, Superfund, and RCRA Hotline at 1-800-424-9346 (or 703-412-9810 in the Washington DC metro area) or read *EPA's Frequently Asked Questions About Waste* at <http://www.epa.gov/osw/basifact.htm>.

What Is a RCRA Brownfield?

EPA defines brownfields as real property, the expansion, redevelopment or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Brownfields can be located in urban, suburban, or rural areas. Facilitating the cleanup of brownfields to return them to productive use is a priority for EPA. EPA's Brownfields Program is an organized commitment to help communities revitalize blighted properties—both environmentally and economically. A RCRA brownfield is a facility or portion of a facility where development has been delayed due to real or perceived concerns that it is contaminated with hazardous waste and will need to comply with RCRA and/or go through the RCRA corrective action process to achieve cleanup. Many brownfields contain facilities that currently are—or were in the past—regulated hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities under RCRA. In some cases, part of a brownfield might not be currently regulated under RCRA, but the land may be contaminated with hazardous wastes that may trigger RCRA requirements when the property is remediated. In these cases, the owner/operator, the state, and/or EPA can work together to find solutions to brownfield problems. Unlike the Superfund program (which primarily addresses



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sites that have been abandoned), the RCRA program generally works with properties that have a current property owner or operator. You can read more about EPA's RCRA brownfields efforts at <http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/rcrabf>.

What is the RCRA Brownfields Prevention Initiative?

EPA has launched several efforts to encourage and expedite the cleanup of RCRA facilities and to move these lands into productive reuse. The RCRA Brownfields Prevention Initiative includes the following components:

- **RCRA Brownfields Pilot Program** – EPA is partnering with states, communities, and facilities to showcase efforts to expedite corrective action and to move underutilized or inactive facilities to cleanup and redevelopment or productive reuse. Four pilots were initiated in 2000 and five more were initiated in 2001. EPA is working with its partners and stakeholders to resolve issues at these facilities. Lessons learned from each of the pilots will help other brownfields to address similar issues.
- **Increasing Awareness of the Importance of Cleanup, Reuse and Redevelopment** – EPA believes that the benefits to the community gained from moving inactive contaminated properties through cleanup to productive reuse—and thus becoming a community asset—are important. EPA is conducting outreach to ensure that RCRA program implementors, facilities, and other stakeholders understand this priority and are aware of the tools available to achieve expedited cleanup and beneficial reuse. To increase access to innovative approaches, new tools, and resources, EPA presents information related to RCRA revitalization at: <http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/rcrabf>.
- **Targeted Site Efforts (TSEs)** – Some facilities, with very little additional effort, could gain new momentum for cleanup and redevelopment/reuse. In order to facilitate site cleanup and to try out approaches that may give a quick boost to a stalled site, EPA's TSE initiative identifies and highlights those activities that may prove to be the catalyst in moving a site forward. Examples may include community outreach meetings or conducting a limited preliminary site assessment. EPA is conducting TSEs at a small number of sites nationwide. Lessons learned from the TSEs will be shared with the RCRA community.
- **Implementation of the RCRA Cleanup Reforms** – EPA has launched two rounds of administrative reforms to the RCRA Corrective Action program. The 1999 Reforms were designed to achieve faster, focused, more flexible cleanups. The 2001 Reforms foster creative solutions to cleanups. EPA is providing guidance documents, informational tools, and training to ensure the RCRA community can take advantage of these reforms.

What is the Role of the Community in the Brownfields Initiative?

A major lesson learned from many brownfields is that up-front community involvement is a critical component to successful cleanup and redevelopment. Sites that conducted community outreach and held informal or formal meetings with the

public early on tended to encounter fewer surprises later, thus enabling them to complete the process faster. The benefits of early community involvement may include:

- learning from the public about past environmental problems associated with the facility;
- gaining a better understanding of current as well as future land-use plans that can be considered when setting cleanup goals;
- avoiding delays that can arise late in the remedy selection process and which could have been avoided or mitigated if the public had been adequately engaged from the onset; and
- gaining the public trust by informing the public from the beginning that their opinions are valued and can help influence decisionmaking.

What Are the RCRA Cleanup Reforms and How Can an Owner/Operator Utilize Them to Expedite Cleanup?

The RCRA Cleanup Reforms are EPA's comprehensive effort to spur progress toward the Agency's national 2005 cleanup goals. The program flexibility highlighted by the Reforms has the potential to expedite cleanup and leverage redevelopment. The first round of reforms emphasized the achievement of environmental results over bureaucratic process. It also emphasized the need to enhance public access to cleanup information and public involvement in the cleanup process. The second round of reforms built upon the first and was designed to foster creative solutions to cleanup by piloting and showcasing innovative approaches to cleanup. Additionally, the second round of reforms seeks to accelerate changes in program implementation by providing outreach and training materials. It also seeks to connect communities to cleanup through more effective access to cleanup information, and to capitalize on the redevelopment potential of properties in order to expedite cleanup. Owners/operators should request a meeting with the appropriate regulatory authorities to determine what actions can be taken to streamline and expedite cleanup at their facilities. Additionally, they should contact the various stakeholders and involve them as necessary in the process. See the *Applying Cleanup Reforms* fact sheet for more information. For an overview of the RCRA Cleanup Reforms, see the EPA facts sheets *RCRA Cleanup Reforms I* (1999) and *II* (2001) at: <http://www.epa.gov/correctiveaction/reforms.htm>.

What Resources Are Available For RCRA Brownfields Prevention Projects?

The Brownfields Grant Program is authorized to fund some RCRA projects submitted by eligible applicants in grant proposals. EPA supports brownfields projects by providing technical support and working with implementors to resolve impediments to cleaning up brownfields. There also are a variety of grants from other federal and state programs that may provide seed money for city or regional redevelopment agencies or private enterprises to address redevelopment and cleanup. For information about EPA brownfields funding, see <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>. A useful resource of potential funding sources for brownfields is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/funding.htm>.

What Approaches Are Being Taken at RCRA Brownfields?

EPA is encouraging RCRA implementors to take advantage of flexibilities in the RCRA program and work with owner/operators, communities, and stakeholders to meet redevelopment goals while fulfilling RCRA cleanup obligations. RCRA brownfield cleanups can be voluntary, enforcement-driven, and can follow a state-lead or EPA-lead RCRA process.

Several states now have Voluntary Cleanup Programs (VCPs) that allow RCRA facilities to participate in them. Using VCPs can help prevent RCRA brownfields by having owners/operators conduct cleanups that fulfill RCRA obligations before being required to do so. EPA is working with states without VCPs to streamline the cleanup process and resolve any conflicts between state and EPA requirements.